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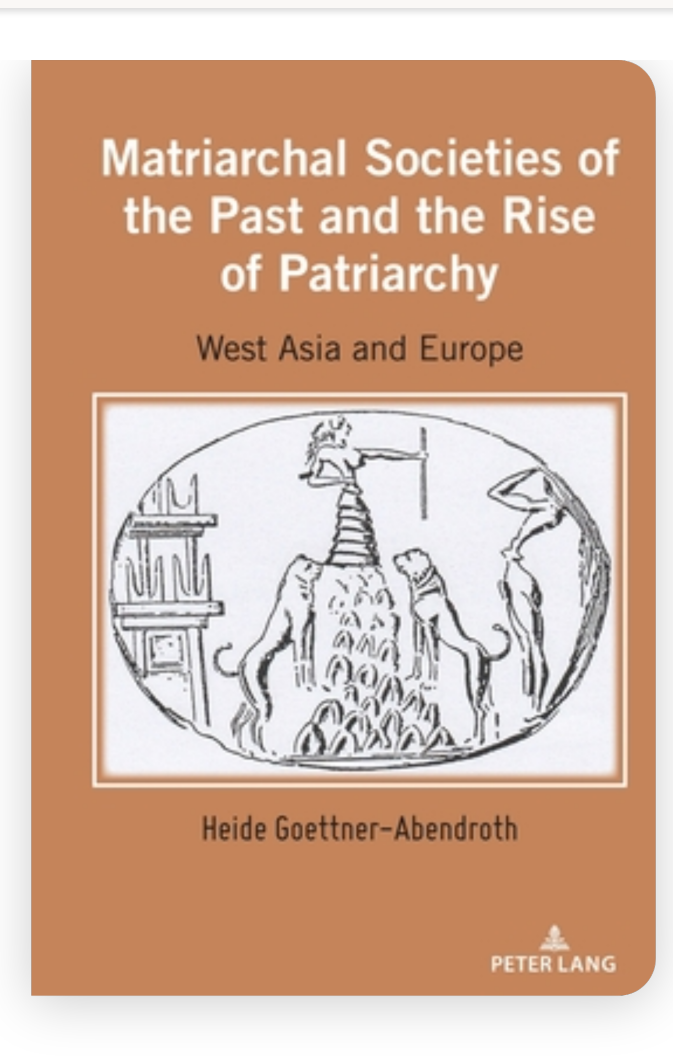

# Matriarchal Societies of the Past and the Rise of Patriarchy: West Asia and Europe

Heide Göttner-Abendroth

★★★★★ 4.67

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This book is about re-writing the history of cultures from a non-patriarchal perspective, bringing the forgotten matriarchal epoch to light again. It is based on Heide Goettner-Abendroth's pioneering anthropological research on still extant matriarchal societies worldwide, which provided her with a new definition of "matriarchy" as true gender-egalitarian societies. According to modern Matriarchal Studies, matriarchies have never needed patriarchy's hierarchical structures of domination, as they are socially egalitarian, economically balanced, and politically based on consensus decisions. This is the author's background for re-examining the history of cultures. She criticizes the patriarchal prejudices which abound in archaeological interpretations, and their blindness to the great variety of human social forms. By going deeper into this material she is able to develop a completely different picture of the earliest cultural epochs, which were decisively formed by women, motherhood and maternal values. Additionally, she gives a logical and detailed explanation for the rise of patriarchy, which is based on archaeological finds and not on speculation and, therefore, has a high degree of validity. The range of the book includes the development in West Asia and Europe from the Palaeolithic to the Neolithic to the Bronze Age. In this wide field, the author creates revolutionary new insights, which are relevant for all social and historical sciences. "Dr. Heide Goettner-Abendroth, mother of the discipline of Modern Matriarchal Studies, has produced a long-awaited, groundbreaking study which not only addresses the origins of patriarchy, but more importantly, the long period of human history which preceded it. Covering the period from the Paleolithic to the Iron Age, she takes us on a journey from the earliest mother-centered societies of the Paleolithic, to the matriarchal societies of the Neolithic, and finally to the period when all that remains are matriarchal elements within patriarchal surroundings. Along the way she debunks many cultural myths, including the myth of eternal warfare."
–Dr. Joan Cichon, Independent Scholar, Author and Co-director of the Association of Women and Mythology "In this time of planetary crisis that many of us believe has been caused by the toxic mix of Patriarchy and Capitalism, this book is an answer to the urgent question, 'Where did Patriarchy come from?' Dr. Goettner-Abendroth's profound research and deep alternative perspective bring to light the roots of our present dis-ease and give hope that by knowing the truth of the past we can find a way to heal the future. This book should be required reading for feminists and social change activists everywhere."
–Genevieve Vaughan, Philosopher, Author of Many Books and Founder of International Feminists for a Gift Economy

Genres Feminism History Nonfiction

542 pages, Hardcover

Published November 30, 2022

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## About the author

**Heide Göttner-Abendroth**
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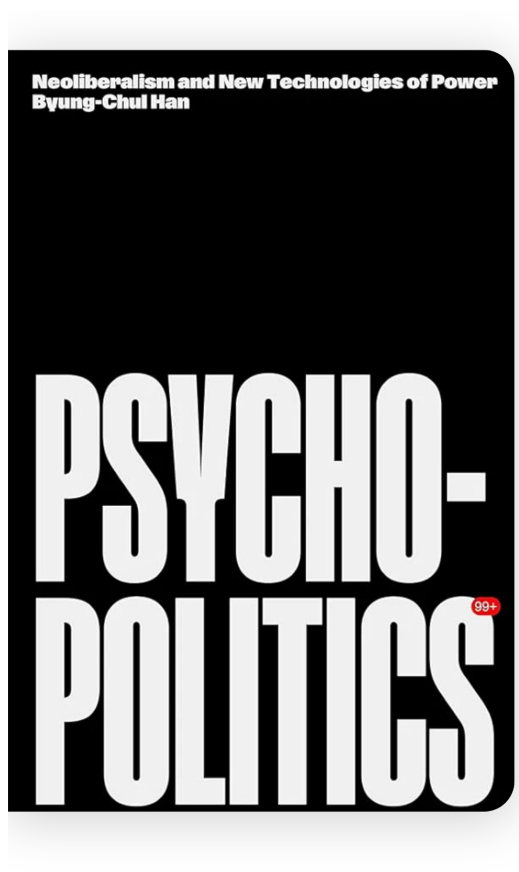

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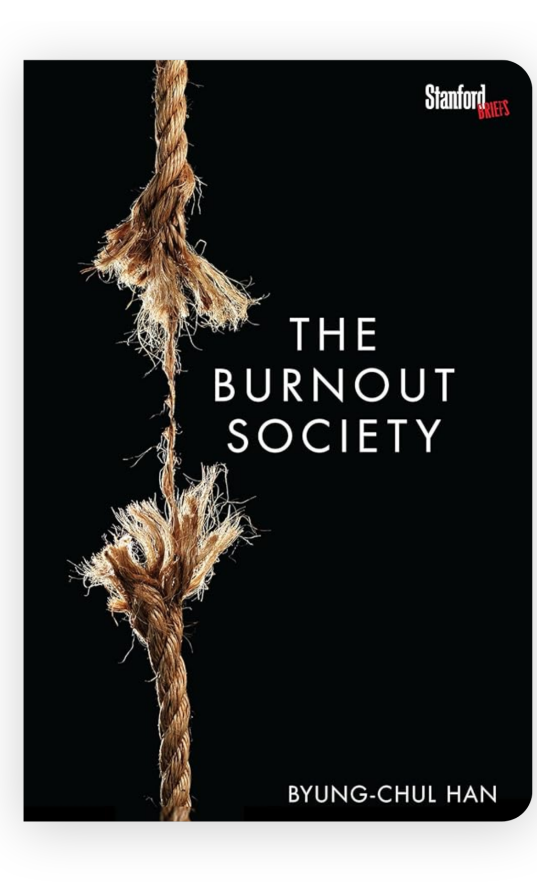

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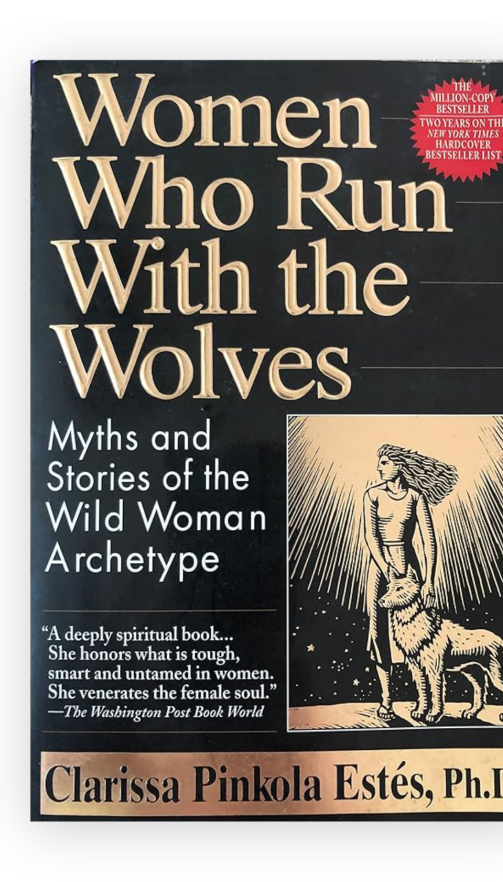

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**Dounia Rezki**
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★★★★★ February 2, 2026

Quel travail monumental ! Ces recherches approfondies et visites de sites archéologiques sur des périodes et régions extrêmement vastes mettent en lumière des détails et des exemples bien sourcés qui apportent beaucoup de crédibilité à certaines de ses hypothèses.
Malgré sa densité et des informations très précises et détaillées, j'ai eu beaucoup de plaisir à lire ce livre qui m'a appris une partie de l'histoire très peu disponible, qui mériterait pourtant sa lumière tant elle foisonne de cultures passionnantes et sophistiquées.
Le style est fluide, avec des chapitres clairs des tables de la matière et résumés fréquents
Au final un livre qui reste tout à fait accessible pour les curieux et les passionnés d'histoire

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**Hypathie**
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★★★★★ August 7, 2025

Editions des femmes provided me with a 'blogger' press service, so I was able to read this work a month before it was put in bookstores.
After having defined what she means by 'matriarchy': "In the beginning [archè], the mothers", in no case the inverted figure of the oppressive patriarchy, after having specified its method of work and investigation, Heide Goettner-Abendroth (HGA), German philosopher, anthropologist, for 575 pages, we tackle a counter-history of human cultures through the prism of the history of mothers and women since Lucy (who ate weed!). The story told by the vanquished for once, not by the victors. HGA never uses the word civilizations, revealing masculine emphasis and grandiosity, but always the word 'cultures'. And she contests the pejorative word 'prehistory', history necessarily antagonistic, according to male historians of course, would only begin with the advent of patriarchy!
Revered grandmothers and goddesses from the Paleolithic to the Mesolithic, until the Middle Neolithic, we observe that women/mothers invent everything. Culture therefore, cave art, agriculture, and even the beginnings of breeding (domestication /commensalism), raw and cooked pottery, ceramics, even funeral rites, for stable, relatively peaceful societies, clan, matrilineal and matrilocal. Men whose role in procreation is unknown to everyone dig trenches, build walls, go-between tribes, then return to their mother's house. As mothers reproduce life, everyone thinks that the dead germinate in their uterus like the einkorn that they cultivate and whose seeds they put in the ground. Hence the invention of burial in uterine caves or under cairns in the shape of a pregnant woman's belly.
Then, thanks to climate change making agriculture more difficult, they will see 'Indo-European male hordes', Huns, Mongols, coming from the steppes of Western Asia, 'surge.'. They domesticated the horse, and possess terrifying weapons made of bronze and later iron. They impose through terror and murder the dismissal of women and goddesses, imposing their culture of violence and possession, and as they cannot produce male descendants, they will rape and enslave mothers to force them to produce male heirs. To do this, they will impose their own myths: devaluation of primordial goddesses trivialized into lovers, daughters, wives, prostituted hetaeras, subjugated lovers, inventing social classes, enslaving defeated men, if they do not kill them. The culture of predation, destruction of resources, overpopulation, mothers losing control of their fertility, of endless growth, a myth that they continue to impose on us today. Except that the Earth has limits, that imbalance is not its design, but on the contrary harmony and diversity, the Great Goddess symbolic of the Mothers could therefore well inflict some setbacks on them.
The work is based on abundant documentation (reference notes at the end of each chapter and at the end of the work), excavations, linguistics, illustrated with maps, wall drawings, pottery, frescoes and sculptures, megaliths which are both tombs, places of festive ceremonies with solar and lunar worship. A remarkable work which restores nobility to this line of valiant women and mothers who preceded us. And which were obscured by the victors, even their age-old resistance: the Amazons erased or if that is not possible, always presented as belligerent, dangerous, even though they were refusers of war, seceding, wanting to live in peace between them.

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**Lisa Torcato**
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★★★★★ February 28, 2024

I am in awe of this book. Heide Göttner-Abendroth wrote a ground-breaking study of the matriarchal societies of the past. She starts her book by redefining Matriarchy as "in this definition, the necessary conditions required in order to speak of a matriarchal society are matrilineality and, in the economic realm, women's power over distribution (of resources). At the same time, gender equality prevails, expressed in the principle of consensus in decision-making, from which no one is excluded. (p.07).

Going over the archaeological evidence and anthropological comparisons, she shows the abundant material in a new light. The result is a beautiful and comprehensive analysis that spans 50,000 years of human experience. One would think that such a scholarly endeavor might elicit an equally academic reaction. What happens is the opposite. Her work inspires a passion that careers away with the reader. I had problems putting it down.

And I had even more problems keeping a scientific distance as the evidence of the rising patriarchy brought about an unimaginable loss and destruction that lasts to this day. The subjugation of women, the destruction of nature, and thus, the Earth, the non-stopping wars and genocide that have been sweeping older settlements ever since the Indo-European groups turned the peaceful matriarchal societies from Europe, Asia, and then the planet, to rubble.

The history we learn in school is, in fact, the history of patriarchy and its self-proclaimed superiority. What no one discloses, however, is that the very basis of civilization-agriculture and herding, language, writing, the earliest calendars, architecture, and so much more-were first developed in matriarchal societies and stolen by the coarse patriarchal groups that destroyed them. And like so many men through all history, they took credit for themselves, hiding where they got that from.

Beautiful and fascinating. There are no other words for this masterpiece.

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**Sephira Riva**
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★★★★★ August 17, 2024

Un libro straordinario e necessario, le cui conseguenze spero di vedere nella storiografia e archeologia dominanti. Non si tratta di una lettura facile: il tema è doloroso, e la violenza della nostra Storia recente e contemporanea potrebbe facilmente portarci a idealizzare il passato Neolitico così magistralmente tratteggiato dall'autrice. Di certo è fondamentale riappropriarci della consapevolezza che il patriarcato non è qualcosa di naturale, e nemmeno innato, bensì che la sua struttura oppressiva è stata costruita e imposta con l'uso della forza - e che esistono alternative.
Unica pecca del saggio è che si interrompe in un modo un po' brusco con la descrizione della società dei germani: avrei molto apprezzato un capitolo conclusivo, magari dedicato ai prossimi filoni di ricerca di questi nuovi Studi Matriarcali.

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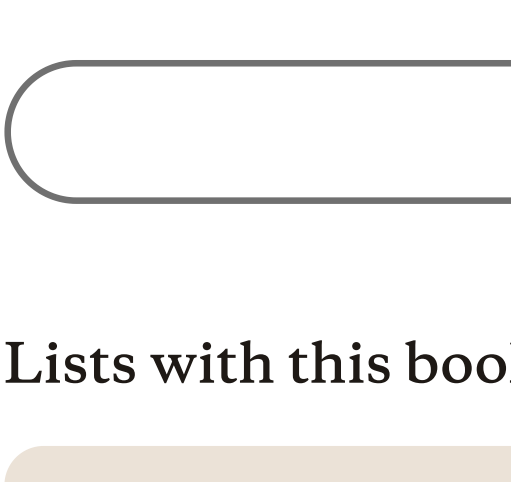

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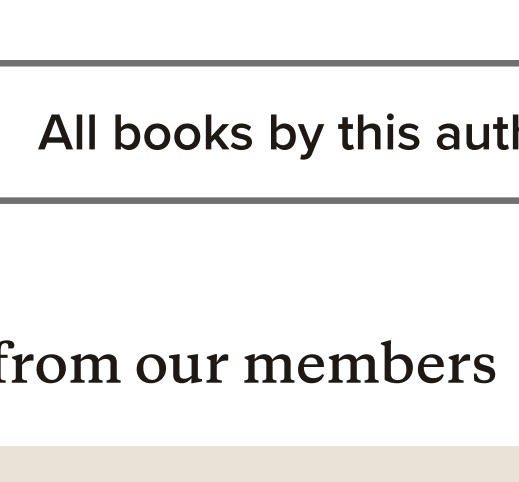

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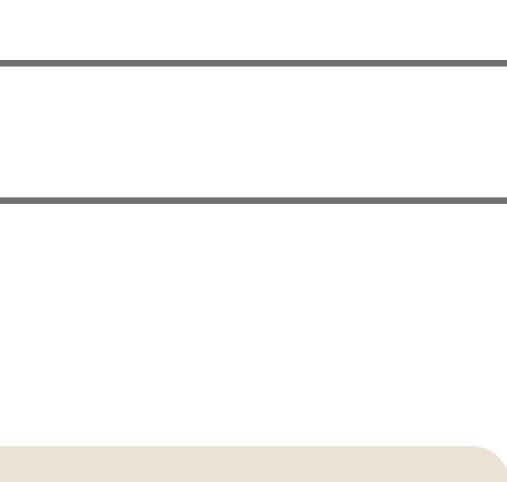

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